

Howard University

Digital Howard @ Howard University

Faculty Reprints

4-1-1934

Significant Trends in Race Relations in the United States

Charles H. Wesley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dh.howard.edu/reprints>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wesley, Charles H., "Significant Trends in Race Relations in the United States" (1934). *Faculty Reprints*. 215.

<https://dh.howard.edu/reprints/215>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Reprints by an authorized administrator of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact digitalservices@howard.edu.

turies that the All-India Census Report of 1911 has the following reference to the State of education in these parts:—"The three Native States of Cochin, Travancore and Baroda take rank above all British Provinces except Burma; while, in respect of female education, Cochin divides with Burma the honour of the first place. In Burma, however, there are comparatively few who have received a University education or studied in a High or Middle school;" while in Cochin, their number is legion. This sentiment is found repeated by the *London Times* in 1980 in its leader on the Report of the Simon Commission:—"In education for

instance, which lies at the root of political understanding, a number of them can show a percentage of literates which is already far ahead of the average for British India. The Southern States of Cochin and Travancore head the list with figures which more than double the average. The great State of Baroda comes a good third. . . . There is clearly no reason in the capacity of these peoples or their princes, any more than there is in their races, religions or interests, why they should not take that share in the common heritage—a solid federal body—in a position of absolute equality with the federal provinces of British India."

SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN RACE RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

CHARLES H. WESLEY, PH.D.

Professor of History, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

The current scholastic year, 1932-33, has witnessed significant trends in the relationships of the white and colored populations in the United States. There have been events which were encouraging and those which were discouraging. When the economic, political and social conditions of other years preceding are viewed as a whole, the conclusion is inevitable that there has been improvement in the attitude of the leadership of both races and the consequent continuance of the amicable relationships between the two racial groups, the white and the Negro populations. These two racial groups have had wider divergences than have been found between any other racial groups living in the United States.

This country has been the haven for the disinherited of all the earth. From

all parts of the world races have come to make their home in the new land of liberty. They found here the American Indians, who to-day number around 350,000. Aided by a benevolent government and by religious workers many of them have made their way to citizenship with its responsibilities and privileges, while larger numbers have remained in poverty and underprivileged conditions, in spite of the paternal aid which they have received. Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos have come into the United States and have made the Pacific States largely their places of abode. The immigration laws restricting and excluding peoples have reduced numbers and have tended also to prevent the increase of prejudice, which seems to vary with numbers. Racial antagonisms between

these racial groups and the white population have been softened. Moreover the pseudo-scientific classification of races which has placed some of the peoples of darker color in the Caucasian Race has created an artificial toleration between them. The Jewish population represents another part of this racial situation in the United States. Although they have experienced segregation, religious exclusion and types of social ostracism, Jewish life has built up a sufficiency within itself, which has not halted at any obstacle and Jewish-Americans have made their way forward in American life.

The people of African descent, who are called Negroes, although their colors vary from the black of Africa to the white of Nordic countries, form one of the minority racial groups in America. With a population of over twelve millions, one-fifth of whom live in the North and the West, the Negro population is one of the major parts of the nation. Out of slavery into freedom, they have come in the face of situations in which the opportunities of life seem to go first to those of fairer hue and last to those of darker hue. And yet, withal, advancement has been made so that by 1930 there were 750,000 homes owned, there were a million farms operated by Negro farmers and 70,000 business enterprises.

The Negro workers included 57,000 miners, 12,000 masons, 32,000 carpenters, 18,000 stationary firemen, 26,000 mechanics, 13,000 carpenters, 130,000 iron and steel workers, 100,000 railway workers, 5,000 plumbers and 8,000 moulders. Many skilled jobs have been closed to Negroes and yet they have pushed steadily ahead into them as the opportunities have presented themselves. However, the men of color who might be locomotive engineers, construction engineers, chemists, telegraphers, engravers or managers of business find the door of America's industrial organizations closed to them,

solely because their faces are black, brown, red or yellow. Individuals here and there are pressing with increasing efficiency against this door and it is gradually giving way. Labor unions do not seek their membership and some actually exclude them by constitutional provisions. When they are accepted as members of the unions they are tolerated only because they would underbid the union workers if they were not in the union, by working for lower wages than the whites.

In educational life by 1930 advancement had been made, with schools and colleges of good standing, but in spite of trained faculties, large student bodies and equipment, not a single college or university for Negroes has been admitted to the Association of American Universities. By 1930 there were 2,200,000 Negro children in schools, 20,000 Negroes in colleges, 42,000 Negro churches which were segregated institutions in the main with over 5,000,000 members and 36,000 Sunday Schools with over 2,000,000 members. Books and magazines by Negroes, serious studies by Negroes, the works of poets, literary workers and scientists come often from the press. But so often education, culture, wealth and religion have not been given consideration, color alone is the sinister bar in the parts of the United States where large Negro populations reside.

What significant trends may be noted in the relations of the races and in Negro life in particular especially during the year, 1932-1933? Are there points of contact which show improved racial relations during this period? Have events occurred in Negro life which seem to bring nearer the attainment of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which the founders of the American Republic had planned for all of its peoples? Have any new programs, policies and trends been noted in the relations of the Negro-white populations? The search for replies to these

questions will show trends in contemporary American life and in Negro life in particular, which are resulting in significant social changes.

ORGANIZATION IN RACE RELATIONS

The first significant trend has been slowly manifesting itself for several years. This has been represented by the effort to substitute the rational approach for the sentimental approach to the problem of the races. The adoption of an attempt to put one's self in the Negro's place and see his handicaps and his aspirations from his point of view rather than to continue an attitude of paternalism and condescension. Group organizations have appeared upon the stage of action seeking to work out techniques by which the older attitudes may be altered. Efforts have been made to measure racial attitudes in an objective manner. The Interracial Commission has led in the organization of conferences of college presidents and deans for the discussion of attitudes leading toward racial adjustment. Since its organization the movement has widened its scope so that it has concerned itself with the introduction of courses on the study of race into the colleges and high schools of the South. The Peabody Conference which began in 1931 carried the work into the teachers colleges.

In the summer of 1932 the second conference on Education and Racial adjustment was held at the George Peabody College. Two conclusions resulted from this conference. The first was that suitable materials including text books and source books should be prepared and the second was that college representatives and faculties in the South should be given wider acquaintance with the work of racial adjustment. During 1933 this work has gone forward. Under the direction of Dr. E. L. Clark of Rollins College a textbook has been under preparation and during the year a committee of Negro scholars has

been called by Professor Charles S. Johnson to meet at Fisk University for consultation on a source book on the Negro. The third Peabody Conference was called in the summer of 1933 and reports of the colleges and committees indicate the exercise of dispassionate and sympathetic approaches to the problem of race on the part of the present generation of white students in the South.

Colleges have added courses treating of Negro life and education. The Peabody College in 1932-1933 added a course on "Research in Dual Education". Teachers Colleges, Columbia University, has carried out a special series of lectures from March 2 to 30, 1933 by white and Negro educators under the title "Negro Education and Race Relations". Admission to these lectures was free to all of the students of the university and other interested persons. A conference of over 200 students and faculty members, white and colored, of southern colleges was held in Atlanta, Georgia, December 28-31, 1932. A critical evaluation was attempted of education and religion as "constructive forces in the achieving of more complete living for people in the world to-day". The Texas Student's Inter-Racial Conference in 1933 attended by over 100 delegates from white and Negro colleges sent a committee to the State Executive Committees of the Democratic and Republican parties requesting that the ballot be granted the Negro in all elections. The National Inter-Racial Conference which met in Chicago, June 18, 1933, sponsored by the Inter-Racial commission of the Chicago Urban League, took as its general theme "How far on the road toward improved race relations in the United States in the 20th Century, does 1933 find us?"

The Rosenwald Conference of 1933 devoted its main considerations to the economic problems of the Negro population. The population and occupational

trends in various industries and agriculture, the status of professional and business groups and unemployment formed the bases of discussion. An Institute on Race Relations was held at Swarthmore College in July, 1933, under the auspices of the Committee on Race Relations of the Society of Friends. Thinkers of both races gave consideration for several days to Negro-white contacts in the United States. The annual meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People June 29—July 2, 1933 in Chicago had among its significant features the presence of Negro youth in its sessions as speakers and delegates. The International Negro Youth Conference, June 20-23, 1933 in Chicago was called to develop a program of activity in the solution of Negro problems. The Amenia Conference, which met in August, 1933, extended its invitations

to Negro youth, whose attentions were directed to the plight of the Negro population and whose reactions to the situation were sought in an effort to find youth's opinion concerning the next steps.

The results of these activities of interracial meetings in 1932-1933 are best rated in the understandings created between groups of both races, for much of the unsympathetic and antagonistic attitudes of past years are due to misunderstandings, which are based more often upon a lack of knowledge and contact. Summarizing these results we may conclude that the promotion of racial understanding has been undertaken in 1933 by contacts, lectures, exhibits, conferences and the publications of books and articles and by the effort to create scientific procedures for interracial programs.

INDIA AND THE WORLD

BY GURDIAL MALLIK,

The Young Builder Press, Karachi.

India's membership of the League of Nations is only one of the many aspects of the greater truth that the different peoples of the world must be revealed to one another. But in order that this "revelation" be selfless and synthetic,—and so complete,—it is of the essence of the thing that the avenue of mutual approach should be culture, and not mere politics or economics. For Life must contact Life in all its amplitude if it is to blossom into beauty and joy. It is a tragedy of the modern age that man has been broken up by the machine into so many bits with the result that the human or the ideal of the whole has receded into the background. And the time has come when the thinking sec-

tion of the world's population ought to concert measures for saving humanity from the trail of this tragedy.

How could the nations of the earth be brought together within the ring of recognition and relationship,—a relationship which is at once rich and radiant? The answer to this question has been given by the Poet Rabindranath Tagore. Says he:—

"We must find some meeting-ground, where there can be no question of conflicting interests. One of such places is the University, where we can work together in a common purpose of truth, share together our common heritage, and realize that artists in all parts of the world have